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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **sHB 5866**

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING INTERNET DATING SAFETY.***

#### **SUMMARY:**

This bill requires any Internet dating service offering services to Connecticut members to have a safety notice listing measures reasonably designed to increase awareness of safer dating practices.

Failing to provide a notice is an unfair trade or deceptive practice.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2011

#### **DEFINITIONS**

The bill applies to any "Internet dating service," which it defines as a person or entity that, for profit, offers, promotes, or provides access to dating, relationship, compatibility, matrimonial, or social referral services on or through the Internet.

It requires notice to a "Connecticut member" who (1) is a customer, client, or participant who submits to an Internet dating service information required to access the service for the purpose of engaging in dating, relationship, compatibility, matrimonial, or social referral and (2) provides a Connecticut billing address or zip code when registering with an Internet dating service.

#### **NOTICE REQUIREMENTS**

The bill requires any Internet dating service offering services to Connecticut members to provide the safety awareness notice in a clear and conspicuous manner. The notice must be given at registration, through a link on the main website, or the site's first entry point.

The notification must include the following or substantially similar statements.

1. "There is no substitute for acting with caution when communicating with any stranger who wants to meet you."
2. "Never include your last name, electronic mail address, home address, telephone number, place of work, or any other identifying information in your Internet profile or initial electronic mail messages. Stop communicating with anyone who pressures you for personal or financial information or attempts in any way to trick you into revealing it."
3. "If you choose to have a face-to-face meeting with another member, always tell someone in your family or a friend where you are going and when you will return. Never agree to be picked up at your home. Always provide your own transportation to and from your date and meet in a public place with many people around."

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act (CUTPA)***

The law prohibits businesses from engaging in unfair and deceptive acts or practices. CUTPA allows the consumer protection commissioner to issue regulations defining what constitutes an unfair trade practice, investigate complaints, issue cease and desist orders, order restitution in cases involving less than \$5,000, enter into consent agreements, ask the attorney general to seek injunctive relief, and accept voluntary statements of compliance. CUTPA also allows individuals to sue. Courts may issue restraining orders; award actual and punitive damages, costs, and reasonable attorneys fees; and impose civil penalties of up to \$5,000 for willful violations and \$25,000 for violation of a restraining order.

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

General Law Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 14 Nay 1 (03/03/2011)